Fascism and imperialist war—Why Canada's parliament saluted Ukrainian Nazi SS veteran

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Last Friday, Canada's entire parliament—led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his honoured guest, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—gave a standing ovation to a 98-year-old Ukrainian veteran of Adolf Hitler's Waffen SS, Yaroslav Hunka. The Waffen SS played a leading role in the extermination of Europe's Jews between 1941 and 1945.

In response to an outpouring of public condemnation, Canada's political establishment has rallied round a cover story. The honoring of Hunka, we are now told, was an innocent mistake for which the House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota was solely responsible.

"I have subsequently become aware of more information which causes me to regret my decision," Rota said.

"No one," he added, "including fellow parliamentarians and the Ukraine delegation, was aware of my intention or of my remarks"—in which he hailed Hunka as a Ukrainian and Canadian "hero"—"before I delivered them."

The claim that Rota and Trudeau were not informed of Hunka's past is absurd. The convening of a special sitting of parliament to hear an address from Zelensky was a major political event that would have been carefully scripted. Those invited to hear Zelensky's address, let alone honored in the proceedings surrounding it, would have been extensively vetted.

The Canadian parliament's standing ovation for a Nazi war criminal was a deliberate provocation. It came at the conclusion of a week of war plotting, in which Zelensky conferred with US President Biden and other top US officials and bellicose speeches were given from the floor of the United Nations by Biden, Zelensky and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Friday's events were the foul outcome of the decisions now being taken by Washington and its NATO allies to escalate the war in response to the manifest failure of Ukraine's much-vaunted spring/summer offensive.

Biden, Trudeau and the leaders of the other NATO imperialist powers are now publicly speaking of a "protracted war" that they will wage for as "long as it takes." To inflict what they call a "strategic defeat" on Russia—that is regime change in Moscow and its semi-colonial subjugation—will require their moving rapidly to introduce NATO troops into Ukraine and initiating direct conflict with Russia.

The standing ovation for the Ukrainian SS veteran Hunka was meant to send the Russian government the message that there "are no limits" the NATO powers are not prepared to cross.

This event is the culmination of an alliance between the Canadian state and the Ukrainian far right that was cemented in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when Canada opened its doors to tens of thousands of Ukrainian Nazi collaborators. This included 2,000 veterans, Hunka among them, of the specially created all-Ukrainian (senior-most officers excepted) Waffen SS 14th Galizien Division, and supporters of both wings of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

Ottawa—working in concert with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), which had been founded at the government's behest at the beginning of World War II—used the Ukrainian fascists as tools of its Cold War policy.

In recent decades, as the Canadian government, along with Washington and its NATO partners, has worked ever more aggressively to harness Ukraine to NATO and the European Union, the alliance with the UCC and the Ukrainian far right has become ever more important

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to Canadian foreign policy. It is embodied in the person of Chrystia Freeland, the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. The leading war hawk in the government, Freeland has been associated with the UCC since her youth. Her maternal grandfather was the editor of *Krakivski Visti*, the only Ukrainian newspaper allowed to appear under Nazi occupation. It championed the creation of the Waffen SS 14th Galizien Division.

The Canadian parliament's applauding of Hunka is just the most egregious example of the fact that the escalation of the war has been accompanied by a systematic effort to rehabilitate Ukrainian fascism.

On June 29, Stanford University provided a platform for the neo-Nazi Ukrainian Azov Battalion in an event sponsored by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature and the Ukrainian Students Association. Insignia associated with fascism, such as the official logo of the Azov Battalion, which is deliberately modeled after the Nazis' Wolfsangel symbol, were used to promote the event on campus.

Last year, leading members of both of US imperialism's principal parties met with high-ranking Azov Battalion soldiers at the Capitol in Washington D.C.

The rehabilitation of fascism in connection with the eruption of imperialist militarism is particularly advanced in Germany. Beginning in 2014, leading academics, with the backing of the political elite and media establishment, launched a campaign to whitewash the monstrous crimes German imperialism committed in the two world wars, including the extermination of six million Jews and the "war of annihilation" against the Soviet Union.

From the outset, the relativization of the crimes of German imperialism was animated by the drive to revive a German "weltpolitik"—a predatory world policy. With the Ukraine war, Berlin has once again bared its fangs. Military spending has exploded as German imperialism asserts a leading role in the drive to subjugate Russia and plunder its natural resources—tasks which Berlin tried and failed to accomplish on two previous occasions in little more than a century.

The same capitalist contradictions driving the ruling elites of the imperialist powers to embrace fascist mass murderers like Hunka in pursuit of their predatory ambitions are also propelling into revolutionary struggle the only social force capable of putting a stop to this madness: the international working class.

Workers in every country are rebelling against the ruling elites' determination to make them pay for the war and the enrichment of the financial oligarchy, resulting in the largest number of major strikes and mass protests in decades. The urgent task is to fuse these social struggles with the fight to build a global anti-war movement on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program to put a stop to imperialist war and the threat of fascism, and the capitalist system that produces them.

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